DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 235 641 EC 160 498

TITLE	Learning Disabilites: Issues in the Preparation of Professional Personnel. A Position Paper of the National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilites.
INSTITUTION	National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities, Baltimore, MD.
PUB DATE	26 Sep 82
NOTE	6p.; For related documents, see EC 160 495-499.
AVAILABLE FROM	NJCLD, The Orton Dyslexia Society, 724 York Rd., Baltimore, MD 21204 (no price quoted).
PUB TYPE	Viewpoints (120)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Interdisciplinary Approach; *Learning Disabilities; Position Papers; Practicums; *Preservice Teacher Education; Teaching Skills
IDENTIFIERS	*National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities

ABSTRACT

Issues involved in personnel preparation are addressed in the position paper developed by the National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities. Among problems cited in this area are obstacles to making changes in policy, curricula, and practica; territorality among professional training programs; lack of interdisciplinary education and training; and difficulties in recruitment. In order to overcome these problems, the committee offers seven recommendations, including establishment of high admission criteria in education and traning programs, periodic evaluation of programs and faculty members; use of guidance, monitoring, evaluation, and support systems; establishment of interdisciplinary programs which provide experience in human development and psychology, theories of language acquisition and use, and educational theory and practice in learning disabilities; development of structured practica and field experiences; creation of a 1-year teaching internship requirement; and implementation of innovative funding patterns for developing model interdisciplinary programs. (CL)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED235641

LEARNING DISABILITIES: ISSUES IN THE PREPARATION OF PROFESSIONAL PERSONNEL

A Position Paper of the National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities
September 26, 1982

The understanding of the nature of learning disabilities as well as the needs of individuals with these problems has changed within the last ten years. In response to current issues in learning disabilities, the National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities has developed previously a series of position papers that address definition (1), inservice programs (2), and educational services (3). This position paper is concerned with the preparation of professional personnel and states problems and recommendations germane to this topic.

The National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities (NJCLD) believes that there is an urgent need to reevaluate current concepts and practices in the preparation of professionals who will be responsible for the education and management of individuals with learning disabilities. It also is essential that institutions of higher education reevaluate their roles and responsibilities for the education and training of these prospective professional personnel. The NJCLD realizes that education and training within the professions that deal with learning disabilities will vary according to the specific areas of study required for professional practice. However, the concepts and recommendations included in this position paper are regarded by the NJCLD as appropriate and pertinent to the education and training of all prospective professionals who will provide service to individuals with learning disabilities.

Any attempt to delineate changes in curricula, including domains of study, curricular sequences, specification of competency standards, and structure of practica must consider the following problems and issues.

1. Philosophical plurality and the vested interests of some professionals have resulted in diverse differences in preservice training goals.

2. The ability to effect changes in educational policy, curricula and practica has been impeded by the organizational complexity and rigidity of institutions.

3. Competition for diminishing financial resources has fostered separatism and territorality among professional education and training programs within institutions of higher education.

4. There is a lack of interdisciplinary (including interdepartmental and intercollegial) education and training in academic programs and a lack of university incentive to provide for this kind of interdisciplinary education and training.

5. The goals of professional education and training differ from those of accrediting, certifying, or licensing agencies and this difference often has a negative effect on curriculum and training policy.

6. It is increasingly difficult to recruit potentially promising and academically competent personnel into regular and special education at all levels because of salaries that are not competitive, inadequate work environments, and reductions in support services.

EC 160 498

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
National Joint Committee on LD
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

7. Many university faculty are distanced from the realities of educational systems and resistant to modifications in professional education and training programs.

The resolution of these problems and issues will need to occur prior to or simultaneousl with bold changes in academic curricula and practica experience.

The NJCLD has developed this position paper based on the belief that the goal of preservive training is the development of well-informed and prepared professionals who will meet effectively the educational needs of all individuals. The ability to attain this goal is predicated on the design and implementation of preservice programs that will guide and ensure the self-actualization of prospective professsionals. After careful consideration of the previously noted problems and a review of current education and training practices in the preparation of professionals who provide services to individuals with learning disabilities and their families, the NJCLD makes the following recommendations regarding preservice education and training.

1. Institutions of higher education should establish and maintain the highest criteria possible for admission to and continuation of prospective professionals in education and training programs. Even with the availability of adequate funding, excellent faculty, and appropriate facilities and resources, the quality of the students in a program is the major determinant to the success of that program's efforts to develop well-informed and prepared professionals.

2. Training programs as well as tenured and non-tenured faculty members in institutions of higher education should be evaluated periodically with regard to their respective abilities to meet current education and training goals and objectives. It is essential that education and training programs as well as faculty members provide prospective professionals with the knowledge and skills needed to deliver appropriate and effective services to individuals with learning disabilities. This will necessitate evaluation at all levels of the program through such review mechanisms as professional accrediting bodies, state education agencies, peer review, student assessments, or internal administrative review.

3. Institutions of higher education should design and implement comprehensive guidance, monitoring, evaluation, and support systems in order to ensure accountability in education and training and to allow for individual growth during preprofessional preparation. Although essential attributes exist that cannot be described adequately within the format of competency statements, much of the knowledge and skill required by professionals is amenable to such a delineation. The advantages of implementing such a competency-based program include (a) increased accountability for programs as a result of requiring students to demonstrate that they have mastered specific competencies the program purports to provide and (b) greater opportunities to systematically individualize a student's program based upon previously acquired skills and knowledge rather than requiring all students to complete virtually identical curricular sequences. Advisors' decision making on a student's course work and practica would be based on the existing and needed competencies of each student, instead of upon transcripts containing generic course titles, (e.g., Introduction to Learning Disabilities, Methods of Teacher Learning Disabled Children) that yield little information about the actual skills and knowledge acquired by the student.

4. Institutions of higher education should establish comprehensive interdisciplinary education and training programs for preparation of professionals. The need for cooperative interdisciplinary programs in preservice education and training becomes self evident when consideration is given to the effects of diminishing financial resources for education and training, the extreme variability and lack of uniformity in programs that prepare professionals to provide services for individuals with learning disabilities, the heterogeneous nature of the learning disabilities, and the different manifestations and consequences of the learning disabilities.

   The development of cooperative interdisciplinary preservice programs necessitates the following.

   a. A review of the roles and responsibilities of institutions of higher education in preservice preparation.

   b. The development of cooperative and shared training programs.

   c. The establishment of a comprehensive interdisciplinary program that consists of didactic and practica experiences in the following areas.

   - *Human Development and its Psychology*. This area would include knowledge of human growth, development and its variations, theories of learning, including the basis of motor, cognitive and linguistic development, knowledge of social and emotional growth, and the development of critical thinking and problem solving abilities.

   - *Theories of Language Acquisition and Use*. This area would include knowledge of the interacting components of the language, such as phonology, syntax, semantics, pragmatics, the acquisition of these components, variations in the development of language, and the development of metalinguistic abilities, discourse, text comprehension, the relationship of language knowledge to school achievement, social and emotional growth.

   - *Educational Theory and Practice in Learning Disabilities*. This area would include knowledge of the nature and manifestations of learning disabilities, including the social and emotional concomitants, the identification and assessment of the individual with learning disabilities, educational/therapeutic management and intervention for the learning disabilities, knowledge and appraisal of teaching/clincal methods, curriculum planning and sequences, systems of teaching content material, systems for the development of adaptive, modified, alternative or unique curriculum, technical support systems, e.g., computer technology, as well as training in effective communication with students, their families, other professionals and various publics.

   d. The development of preservice clinical consortia education and training centers.

5. Practica and field experiences in preservice programs must be structured to enable students to demonstrate prespecified competencies in actual teaching/clinical situations. It is essential that the practica and field experiences provide for comprehensive, graduated, and varied student-centered experiences in regular and special education. These practica and field experiences must be supervised directly by master teachers and clinicians. The site of the practica

or field placement should be selected on the basis of the preprofessional trainees' needs and not simply on the basis of site availability or convenience.

6. Requirement of a one-year teaching internship should be considered for all students who have otherwise completed a training program at an institution of higher education. Such a prerequisite experience is required currently for professional certification in clinical psychology and speech-language pathology/audiology. Although students may acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to implement adequate and appropriate programs for the individual with learning disabilities, their ability to use the knowledge and skills in an actual work experience usually has not been evaluated completely in the preservice program. This evaluation can best take place during an internship year.

   The NJCLD is aware of the implications of this recommendation. It will be necessary for state and local education agencies, private school accrediting bodies, institutions of higher education, and professional organizations to work in cooperation to establish guidelines and criteria for the successful completion of the internship year.

7. Innovative and creative funding patterns and procedures should be explored for the development of model interdisciplinary preservice education and training programs in learning disabilities. Current funding procedures for education and training programs tend to impede the development of interdisciplinary preservice programs. Institutions of higher education should explore funding methods that will facilitate development of interdisciplinary programs. These would include cooperative efforts among professional organizations, institutions of higher education, private and public foundations as well as local, state and federal agencies.

In order to ensure the design of appropriate and effective preservice programs, institutions of higher education must be responsive to the stated and demonstrated needs of consumers at all levels, including parents, local and state educational agencies, private schools, and most importantly the individual with learning disabilities.

The National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities is a committee of cooperating organizations concerned with individuals with learning disabilities. Organizations represented and representatives for 1982 include:

Association for Children and Adults with Learning Disabilities

American Speech-Language-Hearing Association

Council for Learning Disabilities

Division for Children with Communication Disorders, Council for Exceptional Children

International Reading Association

The Orton Dyslexia Society

This is a final draft copy of a position paper of the NJCLD. This copy has been forwarded for final approval and adoption to the governing body of the member associations, and final adoption is pending.

Permission is hereby granted to reproduce this final paper in its entirety, including the above explanation.

Reference as:

The National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities. Issues in the Preparation of Professional Personnel. A position paper of the National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities. Unpublished manuscript, September 26, 1982.

For a copy of this paper address requests, with the title of the paper, to:

NJCLD
The Orton Dyslexia Society
724 York Road
Baltimore, Maryland 21204